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DEPARTMENT WITHDRAWS NEIGHBORHOOD COMMERCIAL ZONING AMENDMENT

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During this past summer, the planning department initiated a proposed revision to the zoning code text that would have allowed an increase in the size of buildings in the city's C1 Neighborhood Commercial zoning districts. In October, the department decided to withdraw the request. The fate of this proposal was linked to the University District initiative, as explained below.

The subject zoning amendment was requested by WSU in response to comments made in the 2007 College Hill Neighborhood Study report and subsequent materials regarding the prospect of a mixed-use corridor within an expanded C1 district along Colorado Street on College Hill. Most of the city's existing C1 zones are located in the vicinity of Colorado Street. The C1 classification offers opportunities for retail uses catering primarily to the immediate neighborhood, and permits dwellings on a building's upper floors.

In regard to this matter, the College Hill Neighborhood Study report included the following statement:

Zoning could also be amended to reflect direction established in the comprehensive plan, creating a pattern of zoning districts encouraging development of a mixed-use, urban activity center adjacent to the university.

Following the completion of this study, the city began its College Hill Tomorrow planning process for neighborhood improvement. For the College Hill Tomorrow open house held in April, staff suggested that an expansion of the C1 zoning along Colorado Street be considered as an option. The pertinent segment of the open house materials read as follows:

Colorado St. Rezone: This proposal involves a zoning modification from R4 High Density Multi-Family Residential to C1 Neighborhood Commercial for the area along Colorado Street near the WSU campus. The justification for this change is to facilitate the provision of basic commercial services on the hill; take advantage of the existing vehicular and pedestrian traffic on this already energized arterial street; provide better continuity between the isolated commercial uses that currently occupy space along this street; and follow the recommendation set forth in the College Hill Neighborhood Study (p. 31). The C1 zone would allow for mixed uses, with commercial services on the ground floor and residential dwellings on upper floors.

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In late summer, the city and WSU prepared a draft interlocal agreement to help implement the University District proposal for improving public service delivery in the greater Greek Row area. This agreement also addressed the subject of mixed uses on Colorado Street, by means of the following language:

Colorado Street Mixed Use Corridor. University will explore opportunities for projects combining retail/service businesses with apartments and/or condominiums to accommodate and augment the significant pedestrian traffic along Colorado Street.

Prompted by these influences, planning staff initiated the proposed zoning code amendment. Currently, the maximum size of a structure in a C1 zone is one square foot of floor area for each one square foot of lot area. The modification would have allowed a developer to triple the size of a building in the C1 district over that permitted now, so long as they received a conditional use permit at a Board of Adjustment public hearing for the increase.

The proposal was presented to the Planning Commission at a public hearing on August 27. The Commission, after accepting supportive remarks from several citizens, recommended approval of the amendments.

On September 9, the City Council conducted a public discussion about the University District proposal. A number of WSU students, landlords, rental property managers, and business owners attended that session to voice concern over the University District concept, and the Council decided that evening to postpone action on the pertinent draft interlocal agreement to a future unspecified date.

Following the September 9 Council meeting, several parties contacted the planning department to express opposition to the draft zoning code text revision. These parties included members of the Greek Alumni Organization and downtown merchants.

City regulations include time limits for completing zoning code amendment processes to ensure that proposals are reviewed in a timely manner. Based on the Council's decision to defer action on the University District proposal, planning staff deemed

it inappropriate to advance the proposed C1 district zoning code revisions when the city-imposed deadline for action occurred in late October. Therefore, the planning department effectively withdrew the request. Depending on what transpires with respect to the University District concept or other related matters, it is possible that this zoning code text amendment might be resurrected. If it is once again proposed, however, the city would need to start back at the beginning with a Planning Commission public hearing.



Most of the C1 districts in the city are located along Colorado Street, such as the Adams Mall property.

COMMISSION DISCUSSES PRE-APPLICATION MEETINGS

In October of 2007, the Pullman League of Women Voters presented to the City Council and Planning Commission a proposal that would require real estate developers to hold a neighborhood meeting to gather input and answer questions about major projects before submitting formal applications to the city. As a follow-up, the League recently asked the Commission to place this matter on its agenda for consideration, and the Commission agreed to entertain the proposal at its meeting of October 22.

During the October 22 session, the Commission accepted positive input from several individuals associated either with the League or with neighborhood associations. These citizens said the proposal would facilitate information sharing, and it would offer a stage for civil discourse involving all affected parties that would help to avoid subsequent opposition and lawsuits. League members suggested that the program could be introduced on a trial basis, subject to a “sunset clause” that would allow for termination in a couple years if the arrangement proved to be problematic.

In its discussion of the issue, the Commission stated that the proposal has merit, but there are many potential pitfalls that must be explored prior to making any sort of recommendation on the matter. Commission members raised issues such as increased costs and delays for developers, ascertaining appropriate project threshold levels that would trigger a pre-application meeting, possible conflicts with the Washington state law that mandates no more than one public hearing be held for each real estate development, and potential interference with the “vested rights doctrine” which ensures that a developer can build a project under the rules in place at the time a complete application is filed with the city.

In the end, the Commission decided to conduct a future public forum on this topic. The committee directed staff to invite all stakeholders to this session, including the League, neighborhood associations, realtor organizations, developers, the Chamber of Commerce, and other public interest groups. Notification of the time and place of this public forum will be provided in this newsletter when the session is scheduled.





Pending Land Use Applications

Displayed below are land use applications submitted to the planning or public works department or city-generated proposals for planning provisions that require a public meeting, public notice, or site plan review in accordance with the city code.

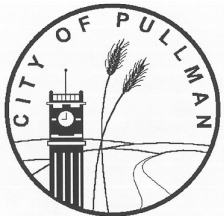
PROJECT	DESCRIPTION	LOCATION	STATUS
Certified Local Government Program	establish historic preservation program for community	citywide	Council confirmed ad hoc committee member appointments; staff gathering committee input to schedule first meeting
Hinrichs Annexation	annex 37 acres to the city	west of Sunnyside Park and north of SW Old Wawawai Road	applicant revising legal description of property
Kopf Annexation	annex 2.5 acres in C3 prezone for airport fire flow reservoir	north of Pullman-Moscow Regional Airport	applicant filed annexation notice on 9/23; PC recommended approval on 10/22; CC meeting scheduled for 11/18
Whispering Hills 4 Final Planned Residential Development Plan	divide 14.4 acres into 53 lots as a planned residential development	west terminus of SW Lost Trail Drive	CC approved PRD on 10/21; ordinance effective on 10/30
Animal Haven site plan (03-15)	develop 12,000-sq-ft animal shelter on 6.2-acre site	1350 SE Old Moscow Road	staff requested applicant to revise site plan; contractor meeting with site plan committee on 10/29
High School Storage Building site plan (07-21)	construct 840-sq-ft storage building at high school	510 NW Larry Street	staff requested applicant to revise site plan
Well House No. 8/Booster No. 10 site plan (08-3)	construct pumping station for city potable water system	605 SE Derby Street	staff requested project engineer to revise site plan
Birch Hills Apartments site plan revision (07-14)	revise plans for 145-unit apartment complex	2200 NE Westwood Drive	staff requested applicant to revise site plan
CAC Transitional Housing site plan (08-5)	develop 9-unit transitional housing complex on 3.8-acre site	530 NW Davis Way	staff requested applicant to revise site plan

KEY TO ZONING DISTRICTS: R1 Single Family Residential; RT Residential Transitional; R2 Low Density Multi-Family Residential; R3 Medium Density Multi-Family Residential; R4 High Density Multi-Family Residential; C1 Neighborhood Commercial; C2 Central Business District; C3 General Commercial; I1 Light Industrial; I2 Heavy Industrial; IRP Industrial Research Park; WSU Washington State University

KEY TO ABBREVIATIONS: CC: City Council; PC: Planning Commission; BOA: Board of Adjustment; DOE: State Department of Ecology; LC: Landmarks Commission

NOTES: 1) If an applicant fails to act on a pending application for a period of six months, said application will be dropped from the above list.. 2) Numbers in parentheses are planning staff's internal file numbers. 3) Site plan review by city staff is generally conducted for proposed construction of developments other than single family homes, duplexes, or manufactured homes; it does not apply to most construction on the WSU campus.





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